

## In the beginning.....



I met Ellen in June 2004 at a Swimming pool in Wafi. She was talking to somebody else about her plans to open a veterinary clinic in Dubai and I, an extremely bored housewife who was looking for a part-time job, immediately saw an opportunity! I approached her and asked her whether she needed any help with her future clinic. Much to my surprise she responded quite enthusiastically and said: Yes. She was not yet ready with her clinic but when she was, she would contact me.



And so it began. Two weeks before the planned opening we started cleaning, decorating, stocking, cleaning (again....) the newly build clinic. Invitations for the opening had to be sent, but the one computer and printer we had weren't working properly. The windows were not covered and the capacity of the air-conditioning was not sufficient, so the heat in the clinic was almost unbearable etc. etc., but we got through it and we were ready for the opening on October 1st 2004.



And there we were, in a brand new clinic with no clients, waiting for somebody to walk in.... At first, the people who walked in were either curious about the new building or thought we were a furniture shop (a rather nice compliment to our decorating skills, we thought). But fortunately we didn't need to wait long. Gradually the clinic became known and we had more and more clients every day.



This created another problem.... I was working part-time but we were so busy that that was not feasible. Working as many hours as I could, seemed the only option, actually not posing a "real" problem because I really loved it, up to the point where my husband asked me if I "was married to him or to the clinic?"

Being just the two of us meant doing just about everything, from getting up in the middle of the night for emergencies, taking home critical patients for night care, staying in the clinic way after closing time to care for the in-house patients, catch up with my other chores and to cuddle, cuddle, cuddle.

As I was a "Jack of all Trades" at the beginning (I had no medical experience what so ever), I had to assist Ellen with her consultations, surgeries, emergency care, logistics etc., and therefore had to learn quickly, which fortunately, I did. Over time, the clinic grew. More clients meant more staff, more equipment etc. and looking at photographs from the early days, it is hard to believe that we started so small.



Working for the clinic has made my time in Dubai special. Every day was filled with emotions. I have been known to cry on several occasions and my irritations were felt by more than a few! But the fun and laughter I had with Ellen and the rest of the staff will stay with me forever and I am grateful for the opportunity she gave me.

If you would ask me if I would do it all over again, my immediate response would be **YES, WHEN CAN I START!!!**

*Lisette de Bruijn*

